



## Yosemite Fire Management Plan: Smoke and Air Quality

### How will air quality be monitored during a prescribed fire?

At Yosemite National Park, prescribed fires near developed areas are monitored for hourly and 24- hour average particulate matter concentrations, to ensure that state and federal guidelines for health and safety are not exceeded. Fire managers must carefully coordinate with state and county agencies responsible for smoke management. Like weather forecasting, smoke management is not an exact science; smoke management is also very complicated, because there can be many sources. If air quality levels deteriorate to a point specified by law or other guidelines, fire managers can decide to take appropriate management actions to suppress a fire.

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### How will Yosemite's scenery be affected by smoke?

Smoke from prescribed and wildland fires may have an effect on visibility within the park. At night, smoke moves downhill with nighttime downslope winds. Early morning hours in valley bottoms will likely be the poorest for long distance viewing. As morning valley inversions break up and upslope winds become established, views improve dramatically. Yosemite Valley is a basin, which is very much subject to impacts from nearby sources of smoke. That is why wood fires are limited in Yosemite Valley. In earlier times, when campfires were unregulated on the floor of Yosemite Valley, visibility was very poor at night and in the early morning. Other sources of smoke in Yosemite Valley include both wanted and unwanted wildland fires outside the park and in Yosemite's high country. Fire is a natural and vital process in park ecosystems. Temporarily obscured views today may mean opportunities for future generations to experience a healthy park landscape.

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### How will the health of visitors be affected by prescribed fire smoke?

Since prescribed fire emissions are monitored to ensure that smoke levels do not exceed state and federal limits, effects to the health of visitors and residents should be minimal. In an area near a prescribed fire, young children and adults with respiratory problems should avoid prolonged exposure to smoke (evening and early morning hours are the worst for smoke). By early afternoon, smoke should diminish to an acceptable level. Before arrival, visitors can check the park website to find out where prescribed fire projects may be planned. If an area is experiencing smoke while visitors are in the park, they can ask a park ranger about other recreational opportunities.

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## How will the public be notified about scheduled prescribed fires?

At the beginning of each prescribed fire season (spring and fall), the National Park Service sends a press release to local media (i.e., radio, television, newspaper) that outlines the estimated time and location of planned prescribed fire projects. This information also exists on the park website at [www.nps.gov/yose/fire](http://www.nps.gov/yose/fire). The exact date of a prescribed fire can vary because of weather, air quality constraints, and availability of fire crews.

As dates for a specific prescribed fire project are determined, notifications will be posted at campgrounds, visitor centers, stores, and other public places in Yosemite. In developed areas, door-to-door notification will be made to residents that may be directly affected by prescribed fire activities. On the day of the proposed prescribed fire, notification will be made to the Yosemite *Daily Report*, so that all park employees can be informed of the project and pass that information on to visitors. Finally, at the burn site, a Public Information Officer will be assigned to handle media and public inquiries regarding the project.